

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /051 W  
-----065956 110621Z /20

O R 110505Z NOV 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7016  
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 6513

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, BG  
SUBJECT: CBS RADIO REPORT ON BANGLADESH

REF: STATE 269574 (NOTAL)

1. MOST CHARITABLE CHARACTERIZATION OF CHENOY'S REPORT  
ON CBS RADIO IS "NONSENSE". AS DEPARTMENT AWARE FROM  
OUR REPORTING, ALL OF HIS ALLEGED "FACTS" ARE EITHER  
FALSE OR GROSSLY EXAGGERATED.

2. CHENOY CALLED ON POLCOUNSELOR AT EMBASSY NOVEMBER 8  
AFTER SEVERAL DAYS IN DACCA AND TRIED OUT MOST OF "IN-  
FORMATION", GLEANED FROM, APPARENTLY, LOCAL RUMOR  
MONGERS, AND WAS CAUTIONED THAT HIS SOURCES SEEMED TO  
BE OVERWEIGHTED ON ONE SIDE AND SEEMED TO WANT TO USE HIM  
TO DISCREDIT CURRENT REGIME THROUGH EXAGGERATION OR  
DOWNRIGHT UNTRUTHS. HOWEVER, CHENOY APPEARED TO BE  
ARDENT MAN WHO HAD ALREADY MADE UP HIS MIND AND DID NOT  
WISH TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE FACTS. HE IS, SO HE SAID,  
PART TIMER WITH CBS, BASED ON HONG KONG AND USED ONLY  
FOR CBS RADIO. E ENTERED BANGLADESH UNDER A TOURIST VISA  
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AS HE WAS NOT ABLE TO OBTAIN ONE AS A JOURNALIST.

3. POINT BY POINT COMMENTS:

A. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT PRESS IS SOMEWHAT FREER  
THAN IT HAS BEEN IN PAST YEAR ALTHOUGH SELF-CENSORSHIP IS  
PRECAUTION TAKEN BY ALL PAPERS INCLUDING THOSE WHICH ARE

INDEPENDENT IN MANAGEMENT SUCH AS ITTEFAQ. FOR EXAMPLE, ITTEFAQ EDITOR ANWAR HOSSAIN "MANJU" HAS OFTEN BEEN CRITICAL ON SPECIFIC ISSUES BUT CONTINUES CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BDG AND ZIA AND IS NOT COWED BY REGIME. ENAYETULLAH KHAN, WHO ALSO HAS CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH ZIA, IS CRITICAL IN BOTH HOLIDAY, WHICH HE OWNS, AND GOVERNMENT OWNED BANGLADESH TIMES WHICH HE EDITS. IT MUST BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT MOST LEADING JOURNALISTS SUPPORT ZIA AS BEST FOR BANGLADESH NOW AND NEED LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT TO DISPLAY THIS SUPPORT ON GENERAL MATTERS. ANOTHER POINT TO NOTE IS THAT MUSLIM PRESS IN BENGAL WAS PERHAPS LEAST DEVELOPED OF ALL PRE-INDEPENDENCE PRESS AND LITTLE IMPROVEMENT OF SKILLS HAS OCCURED IN LAST THIRTY YEARS. WE KNOW OF NO PAPERS WHICH HAVE BEEN CLOSED DOWN BY GOVERNMENT SINCE ZIA ASSUMED LEADERSHIP IN NOVEMBER, 1975. SEVERAL HAVE APPEARED AND THEN DISAPPEARED FOR FINANCIAL REASONS.

B. THERE ARE "OPPOSITION" LEADERS IN JAIL, NOTABLY KHANDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMAD, THE TOP LEVEL OF THE

"UNDERGROUND" WING OF THE JSD, AND TWO LEADERS OF THE SMALL BANGLADESH COMMUNIST PARTY. SOME AWAMI LEAGUERS ARE ALSO STILL IN CUSTODY BUT ALMOST ALL OF THESE WERE ARRESTED DURING MUSHTAQUE'S REGIME AND HAVE NOT BEEN RELEASED. ZIA HAS RELEASED A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF "DETAINEES" IN THE LAST YEAR, AS WE HAVE REPORTED MOST RECENTLY IN DACCA 6438. THE FIGURE 30,000 TO 60,000, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS TOUTED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND THE OXFORD GROUP, IS PATENTLY ABSURD AND CHENOY WAS TOLD SO. WE DO NOT HAVE PRECISE FIGURE FOR NUMBER IN JAIL, PARTLY AS A RESULT OF LACK OF AGREED DEFINITION (E.G., IS BOMB THROWER POLITICAL OR COMMON PRISONER).

C. THERE WAS NOTHING SECRET ABOUT EITHER THE COURTS MARTIAL OR THE SENTENCES INFLICTED ON THOSE CONVICTED OF MUTINY IN THE ARMED FORCES. WHILE THERE MAY BE DIFFERING OPINIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF MILITARY JUSTICE HERE OR ELSEWHERE, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE EXISTING RULES (WHICH FOLLOW USUAL PRACTICE) WERE VERY CAREFULLY FOLLOWED IN THE COURTS MARTIAL, PARTIALLY TO ENSURE THAT THE RECORD BE CORRECT FOR WORLD CONSUMPTION. WE ARE REPORTING SEPARATELY A MAJOR STEP TOWARD DISMANTLING THE MARTIAL LAW JUSTICE SYSTEM WHICH HAS JUST BEEN ANNOUNCED.

D. THERE ARE, AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE (DACCA 6003), RUMORS OF NEW TRIALS FOR SEVERAL JSD LEADERS INCLUDING SERAJUL ALAM KHAN, RABB AND JALIL. IN LOCAL CONTEXT IT WOULD NOT BE AT ALL LIKELY THAT SUCH COULD OCCUR WITHOUT BECOMING COMMON KNOWLEDGE VERY QUICKLY. RUMORS PERSIST BUT TO BEST OF OUR AND OTHERS' KNOWLEDGE TRIALS HAVE NOT TAKEN PLACE. WE ALSO HAVE NO REPORTS OF

POSSIBLE TRIALS OF NON-JSD LEADERS.

4. DEPARTMENT ACTION: REQUEST YOU REPEAT REFTTEL TO INFO  
ADDRESSEES.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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